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MASSACHUSETTS

Investment in conservation is crucial to a livable climate, thriving nature, and healthy communities. Funding for nature provides a return on investment that will: **boost resilience to extreme weather** by restoring natural systems that reduce heat, prevent flooding, and cut community costs; **safeguard clean water and reduce greenhouse gas emissions** by protecting land to tackle pollution at the source and sequester carbon; **defend wildlife and nourish communities** by conserving vital habitats where plants and animals thrive.

BOOST RESILIENCE TO EXTREME WEATHER

Nature-based solutions offer a strong return on investment by improving public safety, avoiding future costs, and strengthening natural capital. For example, restoring natural systems can reduce the impacts of flooding and extreme weather. Flooding is the costliest natural hazard in Massachusetts, causing approximately \$400 million in losses between 2000 and 2019,¹ which is expected to rise by an additional \$9.3 million by 2030.²

Natural landscapes help mitigate these risks by absorbing and storing floodwaters, providing a cost-effective strategy for reducing damage.³ An analysis of federally funded mitigation projects found that, over 23 years, every \$1 invested in natural hazard mitigation generated \$6 in avoided damages.⁴

- Fresh and salt water wetlands in Massachusetts reduce pollution and flooding and provide cleaner water—services worth \$2.3 billion each year.⁵
- Wetlands in the Charles River Watershed prevent \$18 million in flood damage every year.⁶

- Nature-based solutions avoided \$625 million in flood damages during Hurricane Sandy. And salt marshes reduce annual flood losses by an average of 16%.⁷
- Right-sizing culverts and small bridges reduces flood risk and can cost less over time than repeatedly repairing structures. Providing adequate space for fish and wildlife passage also restores aquatic connectivity.⁸

SAFEGUARD CLEAN WATER AND REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Forested land protects water supplies by filtering out contaminants, improving filtration, and replenishing groundwater.

- Each acre of forest near a reservoir or well filters and protects 543,000 gallons of drinking water per year, with an annual value of \$2,500.⁹
- Preserving forest cover is essential for safeguarding water resources, as treating drinking water from an unprotected watershed can cost up to ten times more than from a protected one.¹⁰
- In Massachusetts, protecting just one acre of natural land provides an estimated \$48,000 – \$79,000 in stormwater management value.¹¹
- Forests absorb over 7% of Massachusetts' annual carbon emissions.¹²
- Utilizing wood products ensures continued carbon storage and can displace the use of carbon-intensive materials (such as cement, steel, and plastic) in buildings, furniture, and other products.¹³

DEFEND WILDLIFE AND NOURISH COMMUNITIES BY CONSERVING VITAL HABITATS WHERE PLANTS AND ANIMALS THRIVE

- In 2024 alone, Massachusetts' marine economy included 5,891 businesses, generated \$8.3 billion, and created 86,859 jobs.¹⁴
- The richness and availability of marine species support millions of recreational fishing trips as well, with anglers spending \$1.1 billion each year and supporting 9,270 jobs.¹⁵
- Restoring forest cover, including urban reforestation and protecting forests, can help address the root causes of climate change cost-efficiently and at scale.¹⁶
- Forestry and related industries add \$3.8 billion to the economy with \$9.2 billion in output. This supports almost 38,000 jobs and \$3.1 billion in labor income.¹⁷
- In 2022, 7,083 farms sold \$607 million in Massachusetts-grown agricultural products.¹⁸

The Merrimack River Watershed: a case study of management to serve people and nature. The Merrimack River Watershed is home to more than one million people. Climate change, flooding, urban heat and limited access to green spaces are challenging cities across the region, many of which bear the legacy of textile mills that reshaped the river during the Industrial Revolution. TNC and the Merrimack Conservation Partnership are working to reduce flood risk, expand tree cover, improve water quality and increase park access. Local community input is driving decisions around where land conservation, restoration, and nature-based solutions can support a sustainable, healthy, and climate-resilient landscape.¹⁹



For the full report
Nature's Dividends: The Economic, Health, and Safety Benefits of Investing in Nature.



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1. Hazards and Vulnerability Research Institute. (2022). Haz-Dash: Learning about Natural Hazard Impacts on People and Places. Hazards, Vulnerability, & Resilience Institute University of South Carolina. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/hvri/viz/Haz_Dash_New/FinalCompleteDashboard 2. ResilientMass. (2023). 2023 ResilientMass Plan. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/2023-resilientmass-plan> 3. Chou, B. (2016). As Nation's Flood Risks Grow, Protecting Wetlands Is More Important Than Ever. NRDC. <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/ben-chou/nations-flood-risks-grow-protecting-wetlands-more-important-ever> 4. Porter, K., Dash, N., Huyck, C., Santos, J., & Scawthorn, C. (with Eguchi, M., Eguchi, R., Ghosh, S., Isteita, M., Mickey, K., Rashed, T., Reeder, A., Schneider, P., & Yuan, J.). (2019). Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves 2019 Report. National Institute of Building Sciences Multihazard Mitigation Council. 5. Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. (2017). Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017. 6. Ibid. 7. Narayan, S., Beck, M.W., Wilson, P. et al. (2017). The Value of Coastal Wetlands for Flood Damage Reduction in the Northeastern USA. *Sci Rep* 7, 9463 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-09269-z> 8. Industrial Economics, Incorporated. (2015). Community Benefits of Stream Barrier Removal Projects in Massachusetts: Costs and Benefits at Six Sites. 9. Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. (2015). Looking to the Future – Massachusetts Land and Parks Conservation and Their Future. 10. Trust for Public Land. (2010). The Economic Benefits and Fiscal Impact of Parks and Open Space in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York. 11. Sargent, J. (2022). How Conserving Open Space Provides Economic Benefits to Massachusetts Communities. Massachusetts Land Conservation Coalition. 12. Forest Center of Northwest Massachusetts. (2024). Options for Forest Stewardship. <https://theforestcenter.org/options-for-forest-stewardship/> 13. Bergman, R., Puettmann, M., Taylor, A., & Skog, K. E. (2014). The Carbon Impacts of Wood Products. *Forest Prod. J. Volume 64, Number 7/8, 2014; Pp. 220–231, 64, 220–231.* <https://doi.org/10.13073/FPJ-D-14-00047> 14. NOAA Office for Coastal Management. (2024). 2024 Marine Economy Report—Massachusetts. 15. American Sportfishing Association. (2025). Economic Impacts of Recreational Fishing. <https://asafishing.org/economic-impacts-of-recreational-fishing/> 16. Cook-Patton, S. C., Gopalakrishna, T., Daigneault, A., Leavitt, S. M., Platt, J., Scull, S. M., Amarjargal, O., Ellis, P. W., Griscom, B. W., McGuire, J. L., Yeo, S. M., & Fargione, J. E. (2020). Lower cost and more feasible options to restore forest cover in the contiguous United States for climate mitigation. *One Earth*, 3(6), 739–752. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2020.11.013> 17. Massachusetts Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry. (2026). Forestry in Massachusetts. <https://www.mass.gov/guides/forestry-in-massachusetts> 18. Farm Flavor. (2024). Top Massachusetts Agriculture Facts From the 2024 Census of Agriculture. <https://farmflavor.com/massachusetts/massachusetts-crops-livestock/top-massachusetts-agriculture-facts-from-the-2024-census-of-agriculture/> 19. The Nature Conservancy. (2025). A Shared Vision for the Merrimack River. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/new-hampshire/stories-in-new-hampshire/merrimack-river-conservation-plan/>